

MENANDER

THE MALCONTENT

translated by J Michael Walton

Characters

The god PAN

CHAEREAS, a parasite

SOSTRATOS, a young man in love

PYRRHIAS, his slave

KNEMON, a malcontent

HIS DAUGHTER

GORGIAS, Knemon's step-son

DAOS, Gorgias' slave

SIKON, a cook

GETAS, a slave in Sostratos' family

MOTHER OF SOSTRATOS

SIMICHE, Knemon's slave

KALLIPPIDES, Sostratos' father

PLANGON (non-speaking), Sostratos' sister

MYRRHINE (non-speaking), Knemon's former
wife

ATTENDANTS

CHORUS

*There are a number of minor breaks in the manuscript.
Where linking text has been inserted, this appears in
brackets.*

ACT 1

*Phyle, a village outside Athens. The houses of KNEMON
and GORGIAS with, between them, a shrine to the god
PAN. Enter PAN.*

PAN.

We are in Attica. Suppose it so for now.
The village of Phyle, and for all Phylesians,
This shrine from which I entered is sacred to the
Nymphs.

The locals farm this stony waste somehow, and
it's a holy place.

Here to my right, your left, lives Knemon,
A malcontent, if ever there was one,
Hostile to allcomers, cranky in all company.
'In all company' did I say? Never in his life
Has this Knemon volunteered a friendly word
To anyone, never made overtures to a living soul.
Bar me, and with Pan as a neighbour, he has little
option.

10

He can hardly ignore a god and pass him by,
Though that upsets him for the day, I have no
doubt.

Nevertheless,
A man like this got married once, to a widow,
Recently bereaved and with a baby to support.
He fought with her, day in, day out,
And most of the night as well, like cat and dog.
Somehow they had a daughter; which only made
things worse.

20

The relationship went sour to the point of no
return.

And she didn't. She left him, went to live with her
son,

The one from the previous marriage, who, as it
happens,
Lives here on the other side, eking out a living
On the smallest of smallholdings,
For his mother, himself and a single faithful slave.
He's a good lad, wise beyond his years.
'Nothing matures like experience', as they say.
The old man has the daughter but otherwise lives
alone

30 Except for a woman slave, older than he is.
All his days are working days, digging, carting
wood
And hating everyone in sight, his wife, his
neighbours
In a ten mile radius, down to the very last, the lot.
The girl, though, is an innocent,
So protected there's not a mean thought in her
head.

And paying homage to the Nymphs of the shrine,
She respects Pan too, that's me.
So she's our special care.

40 There's a young man, son of a local farmer
Who's well-to-do, owns a lot of property.
The boy's fond of the city-life but he's come here
to hunt
With a companion. As luck would have it,
He's right here, right now, and, by a touch of
magic,
Has fallen in love.

There's the plot. Watch, if you will,
How it develops. Please do.

Ah, here they come, I believe, and what do you
think

They're talking about? Precisely so:
Love, about falling in love.

*Exit PAN. Enter SOSTRATOS and CHAEREAS,
a parasite.*

CHAEREAS.

Tell me again, Sostratos. You saw a girl, a free girl, 50
going into the shrine with some garlands for the
nymphs and by the time she came out, you were in
love.

SOSTRATOS.

By the time she came out, yes.

CHAEREAS.

As quick as that. Or did you decide to fall in love?

SOSTRATOS.

Don't mock. I'm in a terrible state.

CHAEREAS.

I don't doubt it.

SOSTRATOS.

I brought you in on it because I thought you would
be sympathetic and because you're a bit of a fixer.

CHAEREAS.

Quite right too. That's me to a T, Sostratos. Say a
friend has fallen for some tart or other. Call for me
and I'll abduct her. No problem. Get drunk. Burn
down a door. Refuse to listen to reason. Act first, ask 60
questions later. Your frustration's a terrible thing.
'Soonest gratified, soonest pacified'. If it's marriage
you're talking about and a free girl, well that's
another matter. You wouldn't recognise me. I check
up on her family connections, financial status,
habits. I hand over a complete portfolio, a proper
record of how reliable I am.

SOSTRATOS.

Mmm. Yes, impressive. But not quite what I had in
mind.

CHAEREAS.

Let's hear the problem, then. 70

SOSTRATOS.

First thing this morning I sent my man Pyrrhias –

you know Pyrrias, the one I take hunting – I sent him off.

CHAEREAS.

Off? Off where?

SOSTRATOS.

Off to see the girl's father, or whoever's head of the household.

CHAEREAS.

Oh dear, oh dear.

SOSTRATOS.

Yes, it wasn't very clever, I see that. It's not really a job for a slave. 'Love and judgement are poor bedfellows'. I can't for the life of me think where he's got to. I told him to discover the lie of the land and come straight home.

80

Enter PYRRHIAS.

PYRRHIAS.

Gangway. Mind your backs. I'm coming through. There's a loony after me.

SOSTRATOS.

What the hell . . . ? Pyrrias . . .

PYRRHIAS.

Scatter.

SOSTRATOS.

What is it?

PYRRHIAS.

Clods of earth. Slinging them at me. Stones. I'm all in.

SOSTRATOS.

Slinging them at you? Now where are you off to, you little devil?

PYRRHIAS.

What? Whew. Maybe he's called off the chase.

SOSTRATOS.

Nobody's after you, for God's sake.

PYRRHIAS.

I could have sworn he was.

SOSTRATOS.

What are you talking about?

PYRRHIAS.

We've got to get out of here. Please.

SOSTRATOS.

And go where?

PYRRHIAS.

As far as possible from that front door. That man you sent me to see. He's a psychopath, out of his tree. What a business. I've broken half my toes.

90

SOSTRATOS.

Damnation. Is the fellow drunk or what?

CHAEREAS.

Plainly.

PYRRHIAS.

Would that I were. I'm all in. Keep on the lookout. Oh, I can hardly speak. Run out of puff. What I did was, I knocked at this door here and said that I wanted to speak to the master of the house. Out came some superannuated old biddy who came over here, where I'm standing now, and pointed him out to me up there on the ridge, wandering about looking for wild pears to pick till he could pick a wild quarrel with me.

100

CHAEREAS.

I don't like the sound of that. What then, old fellow?

PYRRHIAS.

I headed off across the field towards him. Not wanting to intrude and intending to show him my intentions were friendly, I stopped a little way off and called out to him 'Oy, Dad, I've come on business and I'm in a hurry'. And quick as a flash, he replied 'Do you realise you're on private

- 110 property, you poxy devil? What do you want?' And he picked up a clod of earth and slung it at me, full in the face.

CHAEREAS.

The devil he did.

PYRRHIAS.

Then while I had my eyes closed and was swearing back at him a bit, he picked up a piece of fencing and belted me with it. 'What's your business with me, then?', he kept asking and 'What's wrong with the public road?', shouting away at the top of his voice.

CHAEREAS.

He sounds like a lunatic, this farmer.

PYRRHIAS.

- 120 Finally, I ran off and he ran after me, chasing me round the ridge for about two miles, then down into the wood flinging stones and lumps of earth at me. And when he ran out of them, he started throwing his pears. What a savage. Crazy old fool. Please, I beg you. Let's go.

SOSTRATOS.

Like cowards?

PYRRHIAS.

I don't think you realise. We're in trouble here. He'll eat us alive.

CHAEREAS.

I do really think he may have just been a little bit upset just now. As a result of which, I do really think, Sostratos, it would be a good idea to put off seeing him for the time being. Discretion and valour, you know, that sort of thing.

PYRRHIAS.

You're right there.

CHAEREAS.

- 130 He often is hypersensitive, you find, your poor farmer, not just this one. They're all the same.

Tomorrow, at dawn, I'll come back and have a quiet word with him. In his own home. And you'd better head off to your home. This'll sort itself out.

PYRRHIAS.

Fine.

Exit CHAEREAS.

SOSTRATOS.

He was just looking for an excuse and glad to find it. It was abundantly clear he had no wish to accompany me, and doesn't want me to get married, if it comes to that. And as for you, I hope you rot in hell.

140

PYRRHIAS.

What did I do?

SOSTRATOS.

You damaged his land. Pinched something probably.

PYRRHIAS.

Pinched something?

SOSTRATOS.

I'm meant to believe he just upped and hit you for doing nothing?

PYRRHIAS.

Yes he did. And here he comes. I'm off, thanks very much. You talk to him.

Exit PYRRHIAS.

SOSTRATOS.

Would that I could. I'm completely useless the moment I open my mouth. What do you say to a man like this? Lord, he doesn't look exactly sociable. Somewhat formidable. Maybe I'll move away from his front door a little. That's better. Gracious. He's all by himself but he's shouting. That's not a particularly healthy sign. God, I'm terrified. Why not admit it?

150

Enter KNEMON.

KNEMON.

Perseus was the lucky one and no mistake. Twice over. He had wings. He could fly. He never had to meet people, walking about. And if he did meet people he had this device for turning them into stone. How about that, eh? I could do with one of them. The world would be full of statues. Every-
 160 where. God, what a life. People! They talk to you. They wander all over your land. I haven't got time to stand around gossiping, for Heaven's sake. I've given up trying to farm this bit altogether. They've driven me out. Passers-by. I'm a refugee. Now they chase me up the hill. In droves. Oh, for God's sake. Look at that, will you? Here's another of them. At the front door. Just standing there.

SOSTRATOS.

You don't suppose he'll hit me, do you?

KNEMON.

Is there no privacy? You couldn't find a quiet spot
 170 to commit suicide.

SOSTRATOS.

Is it me he's annoyed with? I arranged to meet someone here, old chap. Just waiting for him.

KNEMON.

What did I tell you? What do you think this is, a pedestrian precinct? The War Memorial? Use my front door, why don't you, if you want to arrange an assignation? Why don't I change everything about out here? Dedicate a bench. No, wait. I'll have a shelter built. You can use it as your headquarters. It hurts, you know that? Persecution, that's what I call it.

Exit KNEMON into his house.

SOSTRATOS.

Complicated, that's what I call it. This requires the
 180 subtle approach, I think. It certainly does. Maybe

I'd better fetch Getas, my father's slave. Yes, by God, I will. He's hot stuff at all this intriguing and what have you. He's had enough experience. He'll soon exorcise this demon, no problem. I'll not let the grass grow under my feet. A lot can happen in a day. Whoops, there's his door again. Someone's coming out.

Enter KNEMON's daughter carrying a pitcher.

DAUGHTER.

It would happen to me. What am I going to do? Nurse was fetching water and she's dropped the bucket down the well. 190

SOSTRATOS.

Good lord. Heavens above. I can't fight it. She's gorgeous.

DAUGHTER.

He just told me to go and put the kettle on.

SOSTRATOS.

I'm quite overcome. Well, wouldn't you be?

DAUGHTER.

If he finds out, he'll kill her. Not a moment to lose. Nymphs, dear Nymphs, I'll have to get my water from you. As long as there isn't a sacrifice going on. I'd hate to interrupt.

SOSTRATOS.

Allow me. I'd be delighted to fill your pitcher for you. Won't be a moment. 200

DAUGHTER.

Would you? Oh, thank you so much.

SOSTRATOS.

There's something so . . . independent about her, for all she's just a country girl. I'm lost. Beyond redemption.

Exit SOSTRATOS into the shrine.

DAUGHTER.

No. Someone's coming? If it's Father he'll murder me.

Enter DAOS from GORGIAS' house.

DAOS.

(*talking back to someone indoors*) I've spent ages doing the domestic chores already and he's out there working all on his own. I've got to go. Poverty. I hate you. What you make us put up with. You've been a permanent guest here since heaven knows when.
210 Why don't you take a holiday?

Re-enter SOSTRATOS with the pitcher.

SOSTRATOS.

There you are.

DAUGHTER.

Bring it over here.

DAOS.

What's this fellow after?

SOSTRATOS.

Cheerio. Watch out for your father.

Exit DAUGHTER.

This is hell. Stop complaining, Sostratos. It's all going to work out.

DAOS.

What's going to work out?

SOSTRATOS.

Nothing to worry about. Follow the plan. Fetch Getas and tell him all about it.

Exit SOSTRATOS.

DAOS.

220 This doesn't smell right. What's going on? Very fishy. A young chap running errands for a girl. That can't be right. As for you, Knemon, God rot you for letting an innocent young girl wander about on her

own without any sort of a chaperon. I expect this chancer found out and thought he was onto a good thing. I ought to let her brother know about this so we can arrange to keep an eye on the girl. In fact, I'd better do that right now. Look, here's a group of drunks heading for the shrine. I don't think I want 230 to get involved with that lot.

Exit DAOS. Enter CHORUS.

CHORAL INTERLUDE.

ACT 2

Enter GORGIAS and DAOS.

GORGIAS.

Do you mean to tell me you were that casual?

DAOS.

What do you mean?

GORGIAS.

For God's sake, Daos. What you should have done if you saw this man accosting the girl was confront him and tell him he'd better not be caught at it again. Instead of passing by on the other side as though it was none of your business. She's my sister, for God's sake, and as far as you're concerned, that makes her family. Even if her father wants nothing 240 to do with us, that's no reason for our being as bloody-minded as he is. Her scandal would be our scandal. You know what they say. 'Shame in a kindred cannot be avoided'. It's all one to the man in the street. Knock on the door.

DAOS.

Please, sir, I'd rather not. The old man scares me. If he finds me on the doorstep he'll lynch me.

GORGIAS.

He's a crotchety old devil, I grant you. You can't 250

make someone reform. There's no law against being miserable. And there is a law saying we can't force him to listen to reason.

DAOS.

Hang on. It's not such a wasted journey. Here he comes again. I said he would.

GORGAS.

The one in the posh cloak? Is that him?

DAOS.

I'm sure it is.

GORGAS.

Shifty eyes he's got.

Enter SOSTRATOS.

SOSTRATOS.

260 Getas was out. Of course. Mother's off to some sacrifice somewhere for some god or other – as usual – saturating the district, so Getas is off hiring a cook. I don't fancy getting involved with that sort of tomfoolery so, here I am, back on the job myself. I've had enough of these toings and froings. I'm doing my own talking in future. Knock at the door and over the top.

GORGAS.

270 Just a moment, young man. A rather serious word in your ear, if you've no objection?

SOSTRATOS.

With pleasure. Fire away.

GORGAS.

280 There's a tide, you know, which knocks at every gate, in shallows or in miseries. Success is not in mortals to command and Fortune smiles but to a point, young man. What plea obscures the show of evil, eh? Men's evil manners live in brass while poverty is no vice and may be mother to all virtue, the poor man's wealth. Mark me well. In other words, don't push your luck just because you have a

coin or two in your purse but we don't. Let deserving be the mother of good luck.

SOSTRATOS.

Sorry? Am I meant to have done something?

GORGAS.

It would appear to me that you are engaged in a nefarious activity, namely attempted seduction of a virgin, a free virgin at that, a crime worthy of several death-sentences to run concurrently. 290

SOSTRATOS.

Good gracious.

GORGAS.

Anyway, it is wrong that you should use your idleness to take advantage of our lack of it. If wishes were horses, beggars would ride. I'll tell you one thing, though. For free. The beggar's purse may be bottomless but prick him and he bleeds.

SOSTRATOS.

My dear chap, do let me get a word in. 300

DAOS.

Good on you, boss. You tell him.

SOSTRATOS.

Just hang on a moment and listen, will you? I saw a girl. Here. And I fell in love with her. If that's a crime, I'm a criminal. What can a man say? I'm not 'engaged in a nefarious activity'. I've come to talk to her father. I'm freeborn, comfortably off and I'm ready to take her without a dowry. And I swear to love her always and to look after her. If I had any evil designs upon her, or planned any sort of clandestine liaison, may Pan and the Nymphs knock me flat, here on her doorstep. I'm quite annoyed, actually, and I don't mind telling you, that you should think I looked like that sort of person. 310

GORGAS.

Ah well. Right then. Look, if I spoke a little out of

turn, there, don't you worry about it. I'm convinced. You've convinced me and I'm happy to declare myself on your side. I'm not a disinterested party, you see. I'm the girl's brother – half-brother – we have the same mother. So. That's why I spoke as I did. Alright? Good for you.

SOSTRATOS.

320 Good lord. So you'll give me a hand, will you?

GORGAS.

What sort of a hand?

SOSTRATOS.

I can tell you're a decent fellow . . .

GORGAS.

Look, I wouldn't want to invent excuses. You'd better know the truth. The girl's father is, how can I put it? I don't think there's anyone quite like him. I don't think there ever has been.

SOSTRATOS.

Difficult, is he? I think I know him.

GORGAS.

330 This man is the bottom line. The estate's worth, oh, a good two talents. And he farms it single-handed without as much as a labourer. There's no domestic slave, not even a neighbour to give him a hand, noone. His greatest joy is never to set eyes on anybody. Except for his daughter who has to work alongside him most of the time. She's the only one he'll communicate with. Anyone else would be hard pressed to get a word out of him. He says he'll only marry her off when he finds a kindred spirit.

SOSTRATOS.

Never, you mean.

GORGAS.

340 So give up, my friend. You're on a loser. For us it's different. He's the penance Fate demands of family.

SOSTRATOS.

But love. Have you never been in love, a young man like you?

GORGAS.

Hardly.

SOSTRATOS.

Why ever not? What's to stop you?

GORGAS.

Economics, that's what. We can't afford luxuries.

SOSTRATOS.

No. You've never been in love. I can tell. That's the voice of inexperience. You warn me off? No point. Where love is concerned 'tis God, not Man disposes'.

GORGAS.

Suffer, then. It's no skin off my nose. But you're wasting your time.

SOSTRATOS.

Not if I'm successful.

GORGAS.

Which you won't be. Look. I'll come with you, if you like. He's working down in the valley at the moment, next to my land. I'll put it to him. 350

SOSTRATOS.

How exactly?

GORGAS.

I'll bring up the question of his daughter getting married – something devoutly to be wished for in my opinion. You'll see. He'll blast off at everyone in all directions and the sort of lives they lead. I tell you, he's hardly likely to take kindly to a member of the leisured classes. You'd better keep out of sight altogether.

SOSTRATOS.

Is he there now?

GORGAS.

He soon will be. Bound to be. He's a creature of habit.

SOSTRATOS.

360 So the girl will be with him? Is that right?

GORGAS.

Yes. Could be.

SOSTRATOS.

Lead the way. I'm ready.

GORGAS.

It's easy to talk.

SOSTRATOS.

Help me, will you? Please?

GORGAS.

How can I?

SOSTRATOS.

How can you? Take me there, where you said.

GORGAS.

Then what? Are you going to stand there in your smart cloak, watching us work?

SOSTRATOS.

Why shouldn't I?

GORGAS.

Because he'll throw things at you and call you a lazy sod. You're going to have to do a bit of digging, that's what you're going to have to do. Alongside us. Then he might, just might, if he sees you hard at it, there's a possibility he could, maybe, listen to what you have to say because he thinks you're a country-
370 man and hard-working and poor. Perhaps.

SOSTRATOS.

Well, I'm game. Anything you say. Lead me to it.

GORGAS.

Why punish yourself?

DAOS.

(*aside*) It'll suit me well enough if we get plenty of work out of him and he ricks his back so he can't come bothering us any longer.

SOSTRATOS.

Fetch me a spade, then.

DAOS.

You can. Have mine. There you go. I'll do a bit of dry stone walling, I think. Always something, isn't there?

SOSTRATOS.

Hand it over. My saviour.

DAOS.

I'll be off, governor. You follow on.

Exit Daos

SOSTRATOS.

The die is cast. But why the talk of dying?

380

We win the girl or lose our life in trying.

GORGAS.

Well, good luck if you mean it.

SOSTRATOS.

Good god above. The objections you've raised at every stage have made me twice as eager. If she's been brought up in a household without women, so much the better. She'll be innocent of every vice, untouched by old wives' tales from aunts and nurses. And if her father is a trifle stern in manner, doesn't that make her the greater prize? This spade weighs a ton. It'll be the death of me. Still, mustn't weaken. Stiffen the blood. Summon up the sinew. I've started and I shall persevere.

390

Exeunt SOSTRATOS and GORGAS. Enter SIKON with a sheep.

SIKON.

This sheep. It's not your common-or-garden sheep.

It's a real beauty. Oh bugger it. If I lift it up and carry it, the bloody thing fastens onto every passing bush. Keep still, will you? I can't hold it. If I put it down, it won't move. Not an inch. Contrary creature. It's given me a basting, the bastard. And I'm meant to be the cook. Here's the shrine where
400 they're holding the sacrifice. Thank god for that. Hail, Pan. Oy, Getas, where've you got to?

Enter GETAS loaded down with paraphernalia.

GETAS.

Quadruple mule-load. That's what the confounded women have lumbered me with.

SIKON.

They're expecting an army alright. What a load of blankets.

GETAS.

Now what?

SIKON.

Put them over there.

GETAS.

Phew. I suppose she'll have a dream about Pan of Paiania next and we'll have to trek off over there for a sacrifice.

SIKON.

Who's been having a dream?

GETAS.

410 Lay off, will you?

SIKON.

Getas. What dream?

GETAS.

The mistress.

SIKON.

What dream, for god's sake?

GETAS.

Ow. You're killing me. Pan . . .

SIKON.

What Pan? This Pan?

GETAS.

Yes, this Pan.

SIKON.

Doing what?

GETAS.

With her son. With Sostratos.

SIKON.

What a nice lad.

GETAS.

Chaining him up . . .

SIKON.

Bloody hell!

GETAS.

Giving him a jerkin and a spade and telling him to get digging for the man who lives next door here.

SIKON.

Very peculiar.

GETAS.

That's what the sacrifice is for. A better outcome to such a fearsome dream.

SIKON.

Yes, I see. Pick up your stuff and carry it inside. Let's get the mattresses laid out and everything else ready. We don't want any hitches once they're here. God willing. And don't look so gloomy, you old devil. I'll see you get a decent meal anyway. 420

GETAS.

You're a good cook as cooks go, I've always said so, but I still wouldn't trust you further than I could toss you.

Exeunt SIKON and GETAS.

CHORAL INTERLUDE.

ACT 3

Enter KNEMON.

KNEMON.

(speaking backwards) Shut the door behind me, old woman, and bar it. Don't let anybody in, nobody, you hear, before I get back. After dark, probably.

Enter SOSTRATOS' MOTHER, PLANGON and the Sacrificial Party.

MOTHER.

430 Plangon, do hurry. We should have finished the sacrifice by now.

KNEMON.

What mischief is this? It's a mob. Damn and blast them.

MOTHER.

Play, Parthenis, play. Pan's tune. Never approach Pan in silence, they say.

Enter GETAS.

GETAS.

(to the Mother) So you made it. Thank god for that.

KNEMON.

How revolting.

GETAS.

We've been waiting for ages.

MOTHER.

Is everything ready?

GETAS.

440 It certainly is. Especially the sheep. It's half dead already. The poor thing can't wait much longer. In you go. Baskets ready, ablutions, oblations. *(to KNEMON)* What are you gawping at, dumb-bell?

Exeunt the Sacrificial Party, MOTHER and PLANGON into the shrine.

KNEMON.

Confound the whole confounded pack of them. I can't get a stroke of work done. I can hardly go off and leave the house unprotected. They're a damned nuisance these Nymphs. I think I'll move. Knock down the house and rebuild it somewhere else. Look at that lot, will you. Brigands. This is meant to be a sacrifice. They come with their sunbeds and their bottles of wine. It's all for their benefit, nothing to do with the gods. One pinch of incense, a crumb of holy-cake, thanks very much, that'll do for piety. It all goes on the fire, so that's good enough for the gods. Oh, and the gods can have the extremities and the gall-bladder, anything that humans find inedible. Then they pitch in and polish off the good bits. Open up, old woman, quickly now. I suppose I'll have to work indoors. 450

Exit KNEMON. Re-enter GETAS.

GETAS.

Do you mean to tell me you've forgotten the pan? You're hungover, the lot of you. So what are we going to do about it? Bother Pan's neighbours, I suppose.

He knocks at KNEMON's door

Open up . . . Servants. I ask you. A worse set of girls . . . Oy, anybody in? . . . Screwing's all they're fit for . . . Open the door somebody . . . And lying if anyone catches them . . . Come on. Nobody in? At last. Someone in a hurry. 460

Enter KNEMON.

KNEMON.

What the hell do you think you're doing with my door, you confounded menace?

GETAS.

No need to bite.

KNEMON.

I'll bite your bloody head off.

GETAS.

That won't be necessary, thanks ever so.

KNEMON.

470 You're a confounded nuisance. Ever done business,
have we?

GETAS.

Business, no. I'm not the bailiff. I'm not serving
summons. I just want to borrow a cooking-pot.

KNEMON.

A cooking-pot

GETAS.

Yes, a cooking-pot.

KNEMON.

You waster. Do you think I'm like you? I haven't got
cows to burn, you know.

GETAS.

480 Not as much as a snail, I should think. Right.
Thanks very much. Good luck to you too. Just knock
and ask. That's what the women said. So I knocked
and I asked. And you said 'No'. Right. I'll go and tell
them. God in heaven, he's a right snake, this old
fellow.

Exit GETAS.

KNEMON.

They'd eat you alive these people. They're animals.
They knock on your door as though you were their
best friend. Just watch the next one I catch creeping
up the path. I'll show him. I'll show the lot of them.
You see if I don't. That one's got away with it. Lucky
for him, whoever he is.

Exit KNEMON. *Enter* SIKON *and* GETAS.

SIKON.

Oh for heaven's sake, you great booby. Told you off,

did he? Maybe you asked like a shit-eater. No idea, some people. There's a technique to it. I know. I've done catering for thousands in town. I spend my time asking neighbours for pans. All it takes is a little finesse. If it's some old man who answers the door, then you call him 'Father', 'Dad' even. An old woman 'Ma'. A middle-aged woman, you show a little respect, 'Ma'am'. If it's a young slave, it's 'There's a good lad'. You should be strung up. You haven't a clue, have you? 'Hey, boy'. What sort of approach is that? Compared with 'Excuse me, old chap. Do us a favour, will you?' 490

GETAS *knocks at* KNEMON's door. *Enter* KNEMON.

KNEMON.

You back? 500

SIKON.

What's going on, Getas?

KNEMON.

Cross me, would you? You're doing it on purpose. Don't knock on my door. Didn't you hear? Old woman. Fetch me the whip.

SIKON.

No. Please.

KNEMON *grabs hold of* SIKON.

Get off me.

KNEMON.

Get off, eh?

SIKON.

There's a good fellow, for God's sake.

KNEMON.

Come back here, you.

Exit GETAS.

SIKON.

Lord above . . .

KNEMON.

Still got something to say, have you?

SIKON.

I only want to borrow a pan.

KNEMON.

I don't have a pan. I don't have a chopper. I don't have any salt and I don't have any pepper. In fact I don't have anything. And I've told everyone from anywhere round here to keep out of my way.

SIKON.

You never told me.

KNEMON.

Then I'm telling you now.

SIKON.

510 With a vengeance. Couldn't you just see your way to telling me where I could get one?

KNEMON.

No. I said 'no'. Got that? Anything else to witter on about?

SIKON.

Best of luck, then.

KNEMON.

I don't need your good luck. I don't need anything. Not from any of you.

SIKON.

Well, bad luck, then.

KNEMON.

Insufferable. They're insufferable.

Exit KNEMON.

SIKON.

I feel rotovated. 'All it takes is a little finesse'. Sometimes. Where else can I try? If they're all so scrap-happy round here, it won't be easy. Maybe I
520 should casserole the meat? Yes, that's the answer. A

casserole-dish I have. And bye-bye, people of Phyle.
I'll make do with what I've got.

Exit SIKON. Enter SOSTRATOS, looking sun-burned.

SOSTRATOS.

If you're looking for trouble, try Phyle. They breed it here. God, my stomach muscles. And my back. And neck. I ache all over. I went hard at it, being a young fellow, digging away like an old hand, full of enthusiasm. But in short bursts. Then I'd sort of turn my head round so I could see if there was any sign of the old man turning up with his daughter. Then I began to feel my back. Nothing much at first. But as time went on, I started to buckle. I was beginning to seize up. And still nobody came. The sun was baking. And there was Gorgias watching me going up and down, up and down like a seesaw. And at last he said 'I don't think he'll be coming now, young man'. 'What are we going to do, then?' I asked him. 'Try again tomorrow', he replied. By this time Daos had arrived to take over. That was the end of my first foray. So here I am, God alone knows why, drawn to the place almost against my will, it seems.

Enter GETAS.

GETAS.

(talking backwards) What now, blast it? I've only one pair of hands, haven't I, not thirty? I've got the oven going. I've fetched, I've carried. I washed up while I was chopping the liver. I baked a cake. I've set the table and blinded myself with the smoke. The beast at the feast, that's me.

SOSTRATOS.

Hey Getas.

GETAS.

Now who wants me?

SOSTRATOS.

I do.

GETAS.

Who are you, then?

SOSTRATOS.

Are you blind?

GETAS.

Oh, Master. It's you.

SOSTRATOS.

What are you doing here?

GETAS.

You may well ask. We've finished the sacrifice and now we're getting lunch.

SOSTRATOS.

Is my mother here?

GETAS.

She's been here ages.

SOSTRATOS.

Father?

GETAS.

Due any minute. Come on in.

SOSTRATOS.

I've a little job to do first. It's all rather convenient this sacrifice. I'll turn up as I am and invite this young man and his servant to come too. If we've joined in a sacred ceremony together, they'll be much more inclined to help me out over my marriage.

GETAS.

What was that? You want to invite somebody else to lunch? Well, why not? You can ask three thousand guests, as far as I'm concerned. If there's one thing I've known all along it's that there'll be nothing for me. And why would there be? Ask the whole world. You've got a lovely victim there, a pleasure to

behold. Really nice these women, charm itself but
 what'll they offer me, eh? Not one bloody grain of
 salt. 570

SOSTRATOS.

Today's going to be different, Getas. Bear witness,
 Pan, to my generosity and don't forget I never ignore
 you when I pass.

Exit SOSTRATOS. *Enter* SIMICHE.

SIMICHE.

Oh disaster. Disaster. Disaster.

GETAS.

To hell with it. Here's the old man's servant.

SIMICHE.

Whatever's to become of me? I wanted to get the
 bucket out of the well without the master finding out
 it was in there in the first place, so I tied his spade
 onto a bit of old rope. Only that turned out to be so
 rotten that it broke on me . . . 580

GETAS.

Great.

SIMICHE.

And it's terrible because now the spade's down the
 well and so is the bucket.

GETAS.

You might as well jump in after them.

SIMICHE.

And he just happens to want to shift some dung and
 he can't find his spade and he's running about
 looking for it and shouting. Oh, there's the door.
 He's coming.

GETAS.

Run off, you silly old thing. Run away. He'll murder
 you.

Enter KNEMON.

You'll have to defend yourself now.

KNEMON.

Where is she, the old thief?

SIMICHE.

I didn't do it on purpose. It slipped.

KNEMON.

Indoors. Now.

SIMICHE.

590 What are you going to do?

KNEMON.

Me? I'm going to lower you down, on a rope.

SIMICHE.

No. You can't. You're a terrible man.

KNEMON.

On the same rope, God damn it, and if it's really rotten, so much the better.

SIMICHE.

I'll go and call Daos from next door.

KNEMON.

Ruin me and shout for Daos, will you, you old witch? Am I not to give you orders now? Get inside and be quick about it.

Exit SIMICHE.

Being by yourself, it's a dreadful business. 'Never less alone than when alone'. Nothing else for it. I'll go down the well myself.

GETAS.

600 We can let you have a grappling hook and a rope.

KNEMON.

I'll see you in hell before I'll listen to you.

Exit KNEMON.

GETAS.

Best place for me for offering advice. There he goes again. Tormented old fool. What a life he leads. There's your typical Attic farmer. He spends his life

battling against soil that's full of rocks. What will it grow him? A bit of thyme and sage. Nothing that's worth anything. Here comes my master with these guests of his. Just local labourers, by the look of them. That's odd. Why bring them here now? And how did he get to know them in the first place? 610

Enter SOSTRATOS, GORGIAS *and* DAOS.

SOSTRATOS.

I simply wouldn't hear of your refusing. We've plenty of everything. Heavens, nobody turns down an invitation to a feast after a sacrifice, do they? I tell you, I feel as if we've been friends for ages, áges before I even met you. Here, Daos, take your tools in, then come and join us.

GORGIAS.

I really shouldn't leave mother by herself. See to what she needs, Daos. I won't be long.

Exeunt severally, SOSTRATOS and GORGIAS into the shrine and DAOS into GORGIAS' house.

CHORAL INTERLUDE.

ACT 4

Enter SIMICHE.

SIMICHE.

Help, someone. This is terrible. Someone, help. 620

Enter SIKON

SIKON.

Lord above. Can we get on, for god's sake and pour the bloody libations? You yell at us. You attack us. Confound the whole household. You're mad, the lot of you.

SIMICHE.

My master's down the well.

SIKON.

Whatever for?

SIMICHE.

What for? He was trying to fish out the spade and the bucket. And he sort of slipped and fell in.

SIKON.

The old man? The bloody-minded one?

SIMICHE.

Yes.

SIKON.

630 Serve him right. You know what you've got to do, old thing?

SIMICHE.

What?

SIKON.

Get a nice big stone. Or a piece of rock. And drop it on him.

SIMICHE.

Please. Go down and help him.

SIKON.

Like the man with the dog. And get bitten for my pains. Not bloody likely.

SIMICHE.

Gorgias. Gorgias, where have you got to?

Enter GORGIAS.

GORGIAS.

Where've I got to? I'm here. Simiche, what's going on?

SIMICHE.

Must I say it again? The master's in the well.

GORGIAS.

Sostratos. Come here a minute.

Enter SOSTRATOS.

SIMICHE.

Go on. Get a move on.

*Exeunt GORGIAS, SOSTRATOS and SIMICHE
into KNEMON's house.*

SIKON.

So there is justice in heaven. Thank you, God.
Refuse to lend a cooking-pot for the sacrifice, would 640
you, you old swine? Drink your well dry while you're
down there, why don't you, so you needn't offer
anyone a drop. The Nymphs have got their own
back now. Serve you right. Never mess with a cook.
Not if you know what's good for you. It's a sacred
calling, ours is. That doesn't extend to bar-staff, by
the way. What's going on? He's never dead, is he?
Who's calling 'Father'? That's a girl crying. (It must
be his daughter. No. Hang on a moment. He's not 650
dead. Too bad. Gorgias is going to spoil it. He's
found another rope. He's going down himself. And
Sostratos is going to hoist the old fool up. Yes, that's
how they'll do it. Obvious really. He'll be a fine sight
by the time he gets out. God, what will he look like?
A drowned rat.)

Brilliant. This, gentlemen, I cannot miss. By God, I
can't. And, ladies. You do your bit. Pour an extra 660
libation and pray that they carry out the rescue
execrably and disable him permanently. That'll
make him the most peaceful neighbour ever for Pan
and his party-goers. Me too, if I ever get another job
round here.

Enter SOSTRATOS.

SOSTRATOS.

By all that's holy, gentlemen, I swear to you that
nobody ever chose a better occasion to almost drown
himself. What a moment to pick. Ideal. We had no
sooner got inside than Gorgias launched himself
down the well after him. And I was up there with the 670
girl and we didn't have to do anything. I mean, what

could we do? She was tearing her hair out, of course, and weeping and beating her breast a lot. And there was I comforting her, the knight in shining armour – I was, I swear I was – and saying ‘There, there’ and ‘Never mind’ and just staring at this vision. I didn’t
680 care two hoots about the victim. Except that I had to haul him out. That was a bit of a bore. Especially as I was so busy looking at the girl, I kept letting go of the rope. Three times, anyway. Gorgias was a positive Atlas. He hung on like grim death and eventually, after a great deal of effort, got him out. And I came out here. I simply couldn’t control myself. I nearly went and kissed her. God, I’m in
690 love. I’m just summoning up my . . . Oh, there’s the door. Lord, what a sight.

Enter GORGIAS and KNEMON, probably on a couch.

GORGIAS.

Anything I can do, Knemon? Just say the word.

KNEMON.

What’s there to say? I feel dreadful.

GORGIAS.

Come on. Be brave.

KNEMON.

I am being brave. He’ll never be a bother to anybody ever again, Knemon won’t.

GORGIAS.

This is what comes of being a recluse, can’t you see? You all but killed yourself back there. You need looking after at your age.

KNEMON.

I’m in a bad way. I realise that, Gorgias. Call your mother, eh?

GORGIAS.

700 This minute. ‘Experience is the mistress of fools’. That’s obvious.

Exit GORGIAS.

KNEMON.

Give me a hand, will you, girl? I want to get up.

SOSTRATOS.

Lucky man.

KNEMON.

What do you think you're standing there for? (I don't need any strangers to gloat over my misfortune. So clear off.

Re-enter GORGIAS with MYRRHINE.

MYRRHINE.

You look terrible. Are you alright?

KNEMON.

No, I'm not alright. You can see that.

MYRRHINE.

Then you must move to our house until you're better. You need looking after.

KNEMON.

I do need help. I have to admit it, though I hate to do so. But I have no intention of moving anywhere. I want to face death in my own way.) You won't change my mind either.

Neither you Myrrhine, nor Gorgias. You'll have to make do with that. 710

I was wrong about one thing, I suppose. I thought I was the only person in the world who was self-sufficient. I thought that I didn't need people. Now I've stared death in the face and know he can turn up when you least expect him. My mistake and I admit it. Everyone needs a helping hand sometime. You see, I'd lost my faith in human nature. I'd watched how friendship had become no more than a commodity with a calculated profit margin. And I assumed that the same was true for all relationships everywhere. It was like a physical barrier. 720

Now one man has shown me the error of my ways – Gorgias, with an act of pure charity towards a man

who had discouraged every knock at his door. I never offered him the slightest assistance. I hadn't a civil word for him, refused him as much as the time of day. But he saved my life. A lesser man might have said 'You spurn my approaches. Right, I'm staying away. You've done nothing for us. I'll do nothing for you'. And who could blame him? No, Gorgias, let me finish. If I die as a result of this – the way I feel at the moment I probably will – and even
730 if I don't, I want to adopt you as my son. Treat everything of mine as yours. And I want you to look after this girl here. Find her a husband. I couldn't do that if I was in perfect health. Nobody would ever be good enough for her. As for me, all I ask is that you let me live, if I do live, the way I want to live. Everything else, you manage. You've got your head screwed on, thank God, and you're the obvious guardian for your sister. Divide the property. Take half for her dowry, and your mother and I can
740 manage on the rest. Now, help me lie down, girl.

I don't believe in wasting words, so I'll just say this. I'd like you to understand why I am as I am. If everyone behaved as I do, the lawcourt would be redundant; we wouldn't need prisons; and there'd be an end to war. Every man would be content with his lot. Anyway, that's as maybe. So. You do as you please. And this awkward, crusty old malcontent will simply keep out of your way .

GORGIAS.

Then I accept. Everything. But I'd like your assistance in finding her a husband right away, with your approval, that is.

KNEMON.

750 You heard my mind in this. Please. Don't bother me.

GORGIAS.

There is someone who'd like a word . . .

KNEMON.

No, for heaven's sake.

GORGIAS.

To ask for her hand.

KNEMON.

No longer my business.

GORGIAS.

One of your rescuers.

KNEMON.

Who's that?

GORGIAS.

Here's the man.

KNEMON.

Come over here, you. Quite a tan. Farmer, is he?

GORGIAS.

He certainly is, Father. He's not one of your idle good-for-nothings lounging about all day.

KNEMON.

(Well, he looks fit enough. And if you approve. You see to everything.) Now have me wheeled in.

GORGIAS.

I will indeed.

Exeunt severally KNEMON and his daughter, and MYRRHINE.

SOSTRATOS.

So now I'm engaged to your sister.

760

GORGIAS.

Shouldn't you talk to your father?

SOSTRATOS.

Oh there'll be no problem there.

GORGIAS.

In that case, I offer you her hand in marriage, calling all the Gods to witness. There, Sostratos, all

770

done according to form. I'm delighted to have found you so open and above-board and so prepared to commit yourself for the sake of this marriage. You're a delicate sort but you were ready to pick up a spade and do a whole day's digging. 'Wealth is best known by want', they say. That's breeding. And a man of breeding takes fortune's buffets and rewards with equal thanks. You've shown your mettle, well enough. Just see you keep it that way.

SOSTRATOS.

I intend to get even better. Though perhaps it isn't the thing to blow one's own trumpet. That's lucky. Here comes father now.

GORGAS.

Kallippides? Your father's never Kallippides?

SOSTRATOS.

Yes he is.

GORGAS.

But he's loaded, for God's sake.

SOSTRATOS.

He deserves to be. He's a damned good farmer.

Enter KALLIPPIDES.

KALLIPPIDES.

Missed lunch, I'm afraid. They'll have finished the sheep and headed for home long ago, I expect.

GORGAS.

He's starving. Do we tell him the news?

SOSTRATOS.

After lunch. He'll be mellower than.

KALLIPPIDES.

Sostratos. What are you doing here? Have you finished eating?

SOSTRATOS.

Yes, but we've kept yours for you. Go on in.

KALLIPPIDES.

Oh, splendid.

780

Exit KALLIPPIDES.

GORGAS.

You can catch him now and talk to him, man to man.

SOSTRATOS.

Are you going to wait indoors?

GORGAS.

I won't leave the house.

SOSTRATOS.

It won't take me long. I'll come and fetch you directly.

Exeunt severally SOSTRATOS and GORGAS.

CHORAL INTERLUDE.

ACT 5

Enter SOSTRATOS and KALLIPPIDES *from the shrine, and* GORGAS *who overhears the following conversation.*

SOSTRATOS.

But that's only half of what I'm after, Father. I was hoping for rather more than you're offering.

KALLIPPIDES.

Whatever do you mean? I've given my consent, haven't I? You love the girl. You should marry her. I want you to. Indeed you must.

SOSTRATOS.

I don't see it that way.

KALLIPPIDES.

Oh, for goodness' sake. I'm acknowledging that love is a sound foundation for a young man's marriage.

790

SOSTRATOS.

What you're saying is that it's alright for me to marry that young man's sister without letting down the family. But he can't marry my sister in return. That's it, isn't it?

KALLIPPIDES.

That would never do. I don't fancy picking up a pair of impoverished in-laws. One's enough.

SOSTRATOS.

800 Money talking, as usual. I tell you, money's unreliable. If you've got it and you're sure of it, hang onto it. But if money is Fortune's gift, then why not share it? 'What Fortune gives, Fortune can withdraw'. Yes, and hand it over to someone unsuitable. So, what I'm saying, Father, is while you've got money in hand, be a bit generous, spread it about. 'Munificence is for ever'. And should you happen to hit
810 upon hard times, you'll find it an investment. Better the friend you can see than the invisible asset.

KALLIPPIDES.

Well, Sostratos, you win. I've no intention of taking my pile to the coffin. What'd be the point? It all comes to you. You want to give a friend a boost? Good luck to you. I don't need a lecture. Go ahead, Sostratos. Give it all away. Share it about. I'm convinced.

SOSTRATOS.

Really?

KALLIPPIDES.

820 Yes, really. Don't worry about it.

SOSTRATOS.

I'll just call Gorgias.

Enter GORGIAS.

GORGIAS.

I happened to catch all that. On my way out. Every

word. From the beginning. What can I say? Sostratos, you're a true friend, really you are. But – God, how can I put this – I wouldn't want to bite off more than I could chew.

SOSTRATOS.

I haven't the faintest idea what you're talking about.

GORGAS.

My sister. I'm happy to offer her to you. As your wife. But your sister – it's very kind of you . . .

SOSTRATOS.

What do you mean kind?

GORGAS.

I don't think I'd enjoy living off the fruits of somebody else's labours. I need to earn my living. 830

SOSTRATOS.

What a lot of nonsense. You're not good enough for her, is that what you're saying?

GORGAS.

It's not a case of 'good enough'. It's what she can offer when I have so little.

KALLIPPIDES.

Noble sentiments, damn it. But misguided.

GORGAS.

How so?

KALLIPPIDES.

Virtue as its own reward? Come now. Be swayed, as I was.

GORGAS.

You're right. I'd be doubly damned, still poor and too proud to recognise a benefactor. 840

SOSTRATOS.

Excellent. All we need is the formal betrothals.

KALLIPPIDES.

Then I offer you, young man, my daughter's hand

for the provision of legitimate offspring. And as dowry the sum of three talents.

GORGIAS.

And I can offer a talent as dowry for my sister.

KALLIPPIDES.

Can you afford that? It needn't be so much.

GORGIAS.

No, I have that.

KALLIPPIDES.

You don't want to split up the farm, Gorgias. Now go and fetch your mother and your sister and bring them over to meet my women.

GORGIAS.

Right.

SOSTRATOS.

850 We can all stay here for the party tonight and hold the weddings tomorrow. Gorgias, fetch the old man. He'll be better looked after with us.

GORGIAS.

He won't want to come, Sostratos.

SOSTRATOS.

Twist his arm.

GORGIAS.

I can but try.

SOSTRATOS.

We'll have a great booze-up, Dad. The women too, up all night.

KALLIPPIDES.

Quite the reverse. The women will do the boozing and it's us who'll be up all night. I'll go and get things organised.

860

Exit KALLIPPIDES.

SOSTRATOS.

You do that. Never give up. That's the moral. Faint

heart never won what's gained by honest toil. And I'm the living witness. In a single day, contrary to all expectation, I've achieved the marriage of my dreams.

Enter GORGIAS with his mother and sister.

GORGIAS.

Get a move on, do.

SOSTRATOS.

This way, ladies. Mother, they're here. No Knemon?

The women enter the shrine.

GORGIAS.

He kept asking me to invite old Simiche too, so he'd be left in peace.

SOSTRATOS.

A lost cause, that one.

870

GORGIAS.

That's Knemon.

SOSTRATOS.

Well, too bad. Let's go.

GORGIAS.

Just a minute, Sostratos. Those women in there. I feel embarrassed.

SOSTRATOS.

Oh fiddlesticks. In you go. Just think of them as family.

Exeunt SOSTRATOS and GORGIAS. Enter SIMICHE.

SIMICHE.

I'm off too, I swear I am.

Enter GETAS.

You can just lie there. By yourself, you miserable old . . . It was a civil invitation, for heaven's sake. And you turn it down. You'll come to a bad end, you will,

damned if you don't. Worse than now. And good luck to you.

GETAS.

I'll go and see how he is.

Music (a stage direction in the original manuscript).

880

Don't start playing yet, you stupid man. We're not ready. I've still got that old invalid to sort out. Hold it.

SIMICHE.

Somebody else can go and sit with him for once. I'm losing my mistress. All I want is a few words with her, a chance to tell her a few things and wish her luck.

GETAS.

That makes sense. Off you go then. I'll hold the fort.

Exit SIMICHE.

890

Just the chance I've been looking for. I'll show the old devil. No fear of interruption. They're all too busy drinking. Hey, Cook. Sikon. Get yourself out here a minute. This should be fun.

Enter SIKON.

SIKON.

Someone call?

GETAS.

Me. What would you say to the chance of getting your own back for being fucked about back there?

SIKON.

Fucked about? What are you on about?

GETAS.

The old man, the bloody-minded one. He's in there by himself, fast asleep.

SIKON.

Is he alright?

GETAS.

Could be worse.

SIKON.

Is he strong enough to get up and hit us?

GETAS.

I don't think he's strong enough to get up at all.

SIKON.

What a nice idea. I'll go and ask to borrow something. He'll go spare.

GETAS.

That would be good. What if we fetched him out here first, then started banging on his door? That'll really annoy him. What a laugh.

900

SIKON.

I'm scared of Gorgias. I don't want him catching us.

GETAS.

They're all drinking. There's far too much noise. No one'll notice. We'll teach him a few manners. He is part of the family now and if he carries on like this he'll be insufferable.

SIKON.

Yes. Why not?

GETAS.

Just be careful when you bring him out. Off you go then.

SIKON.

Hang on a moment. And don't you disappear either.

SIKON *exits into KNEMON's house and wheels him out.*

GETAS.

Keep quiet, for God's sake.

SIKON.

I am bloody keeping quiet.

GETAS.

Right a bit.

SIKON.

There.

GETAS.

That'll do. Now. The moment has arrived. I'll lead off.

To the musician.

910

Take your tempo from me.

GETAS *starts to bang on the door.*

SIKON.

Hey there, boy. Hey lads. Good lads.

Boys. Hey boys.

KNEMON.

Ahhh. Murder!

SIKON.

Lads. Good lads. Come on. Come on, boys.

KNEMON.

Ahhh. Murder!

SIKON.

Who's this then? You belong here, do you?

KNEMON.

Of course I do. What do you want?

SIKON.

Pans. I want to borrow some. And pots.

KNEMON.

Give me a hand up, someone.

SIKON.

You've got them. I know you have. And seven trestles. Twelve tables. Tell them inside the rest, will you, lads? Must rush.

KNEMON.

I have none of this.

SIKON.

None of it?

KNEMON.

How many times do you need telling?

SIKON.

Well, I can't hang about.

KNEMON.

This is frightful. How did I get out here? What am I
doing outside?

920

SIKON.

Your turn.

GETAS.

Hey there, boy. Hey girls. Hey fellows.

Boy. Hey, porter.

KNEMON.

Are you raving mad? You'll smash the door down.

GETAS.

We could use twelve rugs.

KNEMON.

Where from?

GETAS.

And let us have a screen-curtain, would you, a nice
big one, a hundred foot long. It must be foreign, and
embroidered.

KNEMON.

It's a whip I could do with. Old woman. Where's the
old woman got to?

GETAS.

I'll try the other door, shall I?

KNEMON.

Just clear off out of it. Simiche! Where are you,
woman? Damn and blast the whole bloody lot of
you. What do you want?

SIKON.

(*returning to the fray*) A wine bowl. I need a big,
bronze wine-bowl.

KNEMON.

Won't anyone give me a hand up?

GETAS.

930 You've got a curtain, haven't you? You have, you
old so-and-so, you know you have.

KNEMON.

I have not, for God's sake.

SIKON.

And no wine-bowl?

KNEMON.

I'll kill that Simiche.

SIKON.

Now, sit down. And shut up. And listen.

You shun company, despise women, turn down an
invitation to a sacrifice. Right. Then this is your
penance and there's nobody around to help you out.
So button up and put up with it. And listen while I
tell you what happened in there.

Music.

These women in your life
Met with warmth and affection.
Your wife and your daughter
Charmed all they encountered.
Besides there was food, a wonderful spread,
940 And convivial drinking for everyone present.
Still listening? Don't fall asleep on me.

GETAS.

No. Don't.

KNEMON.

This is terrible.

SIKON.

What's so terrible? Do you not want to be a part
of all that? Let me tell the rest of it.

Everyone lively
Everywhere excitement.

I set the tables
 And I spread the couches.
 Now do you know me? It's me. I'm the cook.
 The cook. Are you listening? And this is my job.

GETAS.

And a gentleman too.

SIKON.

One poured the noble vintage into the rounded
 bowl,

Mixing in soft spring water nurtured by the
 Nymphs.

One charged the men's glasses, another the
 women's.

Watering the sand, if you follow my meaning.

Then one of the maids, who was just a touch
 tipsy,

The bonniest of girls even with her face veiled,

950

Started to dance, a little self-conscious,

But delicately, decorously, lovely to watch.

Till a friend took her hand and picked up her
 rhythm

Swaying, gyrating, sharing her motion.

GETAS.

Your suffering's behind you, severe as it was. Now
 come and dance. Up you get.

KNEMON.

Confound the pair of you. What do you want?

GETAS.

Up you get. You are awkward.

KNEMON.

Stop it, for God's sake.

GETAS.

Let us take you in.

KNEMON.

What am I to do?

GETAS.

Dance, that's what.

KNEMON.

Oh, very well. I'll endure it somehow, I suppose.

GETAS.

Congratulations. We win. Well done us. Donax,
Sikon, Syrus, come on, lads. Lift him and carry
him in.

960

Enter attendants.

And as for you, the next time we catch you causing
trouble, you won't get off so lightly. And don't you
forget it. Garlands someone. Fetch the torches.

These are distributed.

SIKON.

One for you.

*Exeunt SIKON, KNEMON and attendants into the
shrine.*

GETAS.

There, then. That's that.

Now audience, boys and youths and men of more
maturity,

You've witnessed our encounters with this
malcontent.

Contentedly, we hope, you've seen our victory.

And if content, applaud our antics now.

Crowning our day with Victory's accolade.

END